Effective Teaching of Writing

Shaun Hawthorne
IFTE Presentation
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contact Shaun by email – hawthornes@westernsprings.school.nz

Presentation Outline

- Facts about writing achievement in NZ
- Introduction to *Effective Practices in Teaching Writing* resource
- Key principles & areas of knowledge underpinning the effective teaching of writing
- Seven effective practices in teaching writing with examples of teacher practice from DVD
- How to use the resource for effective PD in teaching writing

Facts about writing in NZ

NEMP Statistics 2002 & 2006:

- Yr 8 students – writing ranked 10th out of 12 school tasks
- Girls score better than boys on over 85% of tasks.
- Boys less positive than girls in attitudes towards writing.
- Attitude declines with age.
- Maori and PI students score less well on 39% of tasks

In Focus Statistics 2006:

- Many secondary age students are not improving beyond curriculum level 3 in writing.

FIGURE 2. Writing score and curriculum level by year.

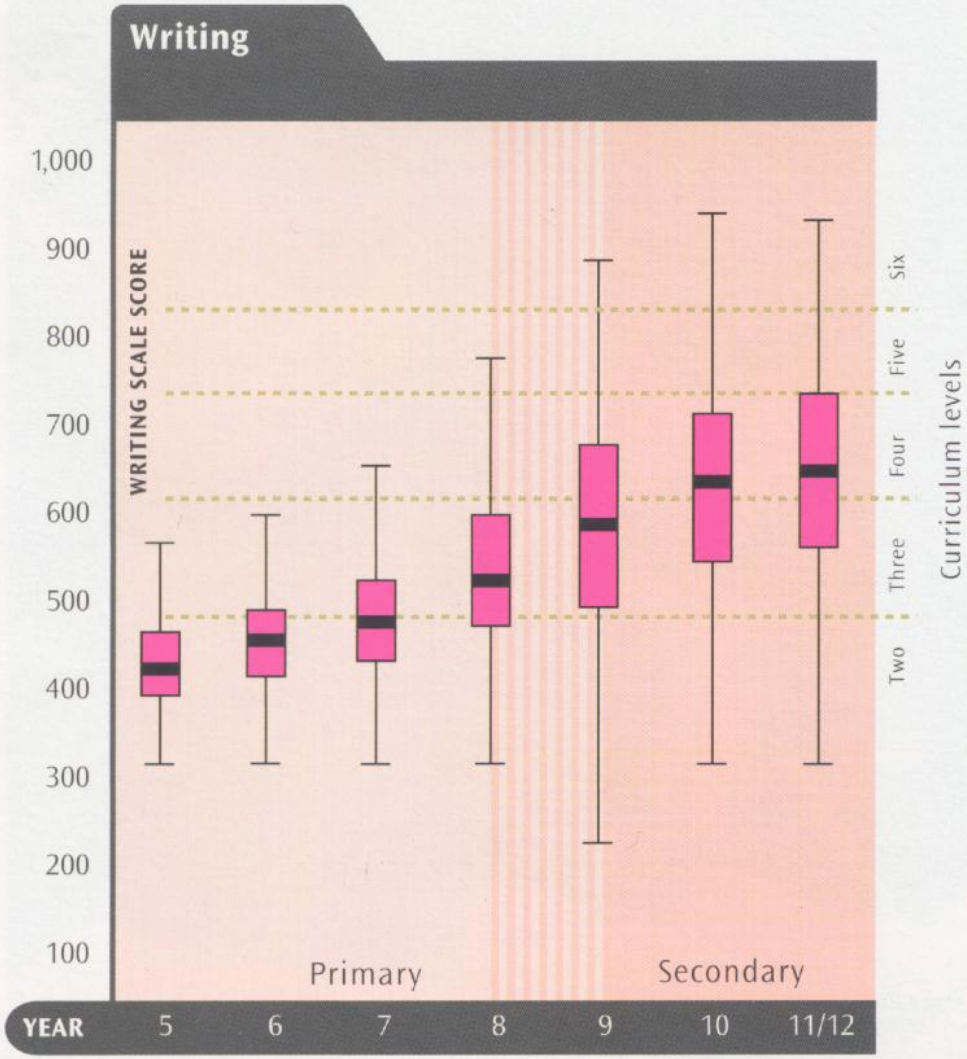


FIGURE 6. Average writing score and curriculum level by ethnicity and year.

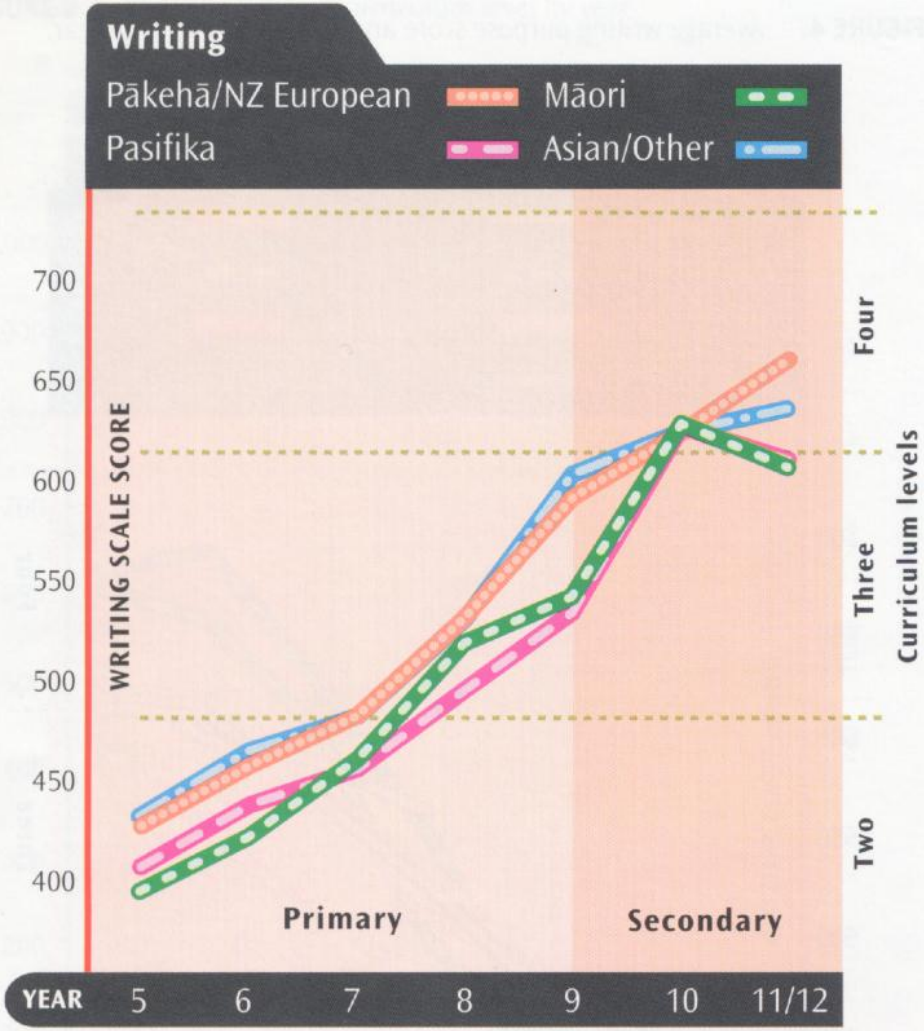
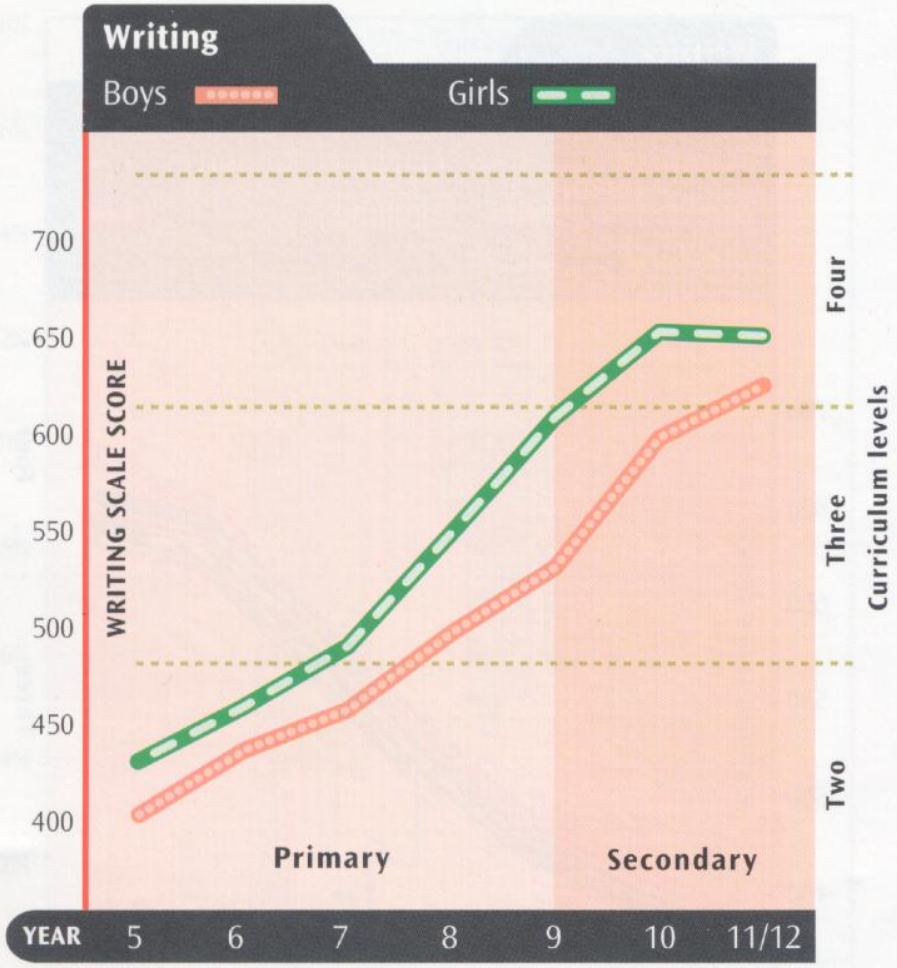


FIGURE 5. Average writing score and curriculum level by gender and year.



Talking Points

- Are there any questions or queries in regard to any of the graphs shown here?
- Were there any surprises for you in this data?
- Do you take any messages from this data?

Introduction to the resource

Teacher's Book Resource

- A brief history of teaching writing in NZ
- Evidence from research for effective practices in teaching writing
- Links to the NZC's effective pedagogies
- Classroom examples for each of the identified effective practices

DVD of Effective Practices

- View by classroom and teacher – about 35mins for each of four classrooms and teachers from Yr 9 - 12
- View by practice – two or three brief extracts from the different classes that relate specifically to one of the practices

Four key studies which informed *Effective Practices in Teaching Writing*

- Myhill, D., et al (2008).
- Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007).
- Alton-Lee, A. (2003)
- Langer, J. (2002).

Section from DVD

Lynda McTaggart's Year 9 class introduction to poetry

NZATE believes that some key principles/beliefs that underpin effective teaching of writing are:

- Writing is an essential skill that students need if they are to participate meaningfully and successfully in the modern world
- What teachers do makes a difference to how well students learn to write
- All students are able to improve their writing
- Students learn best in a supportive and nurturing environment
- Students' own interests, backgrounds and goals are important to acknowledge and include in writing programmes
- Effective writing is linked to effective reading and oracy

Reflection Point

- To what extent to you think your own and/or your department's teaching of writing aligns with these principles?

Four types of knowledge writers need to write well

'Genre' knowledge

- this involves developing student knowledge and understanding of the key text types and forms that they will encounter in their lives and schooling and that they need to be able to reproduce to succeed in the 21st century.

Strategic knowledge

- this involves developing student knowledge of and skill in using strategies that help them to effectively manage the many different demands of the writing process.

Linguistic knowledge

- this involves developing student knowledge of and skill in using increasingly sophisticated and complex vocabulary, language resources, literary devices, sentence constructions and grammatical control.

Content knowledge

- this involves developing student knowledge of the subjects and topics that they are required to write about.

Talking Point

- To what extent do you think your own and/or your department's teaching of writing focuses on each area of knowledge that students' need to be effective in their writing?

Section from the DVD

Section on emphasising that writing is a process

Seven Effective Instructional Practices

Instruction clearly describes the learning intentions and *success criteria* for each writing task.

Instruction involves students in *collaborative approaches*.

Instruction allows for individual, *goal-directed work and inquiry*.

Instruction makes *connections* across and between: texts, text types, content and students' own lives.

Instruction emphasises that *writing is a process* – i.e. requires students to work through the planning, drafting and revising stages of writing.

Instruction involves students in learning *strategies* that help them manage the many processes involved in producing writing.

Feedback is specific and mainly focused on the particular writing task and strategies/ procedures that students are learning.

Talking Points

- To what extent to you think your own and your department's teaching of writing aligns with these seven effective practices?
- Where would you start if you were going to make a change in your teaching of writing?
- How might this resource assist you in PD around the teaching of writing?

Section from DVD

Goal directed work and inquiry

Supplementary slides

What does the research literature say are the most effective ways of teaching writing?

From: "Effective Ways of Teaching Complex Expression in Writing" (Myhill et al, 2008)

- "*Rhetorical*" approaches - where grammar is explored as the tool by which writing can be shaped for particular effects
- Instruction in *writing strategies* and development of metacognition during writing
- The *study of models* to development awareness of linguistic and structural features of 'genre' of writing
- *Collaborative writing* approaches, especially the talk associated with collaborative writing
- Instruction fostering student understanding of the *writing process*

From: “Beating the Odds: Teaching Middle and High School Students to Read and Write Well” (Langer, 2001).

- Skills and knowledge taught in *multiple* types of lessons.
- Curriculum objectives integrated into programmes that were often thematic and recursive in approach.
- Overt connections made across content and structure to curriculum objectives, strategies, students’ lives etc.
- Strategies for *thinking and doing* were explicitly taught, practised and emphasised continually.
- Generative knowledge was encouraged.
- Collaborative approaches to teaching were widespread.

From: “Writing Next”: Meta-analysis of effective strategies for improving writing (Graham & Perin, 2007)

	Writing Strategies	ES .82
	Summarisation Skills	ES .82
	Collaborative Writing	ES .75
	Specific Product Goals	ES .70
	Word Processing	ES .55
	Sentence-Combining	ES .50
	Prewriting	ES .32
	Inquiry Activities	ES .32
	Process Writing Approach	ES .32
	Study of Models	ES .25
	Writing for Content Learning	ES .23

From: “Writing: Teachers and Children at Work” 20th Anniversary Edition (Graves, 2003)

- Children need to choose *most* of their own topics.
- Children need regular response to their writing from both the teacher and other readers.
- Children need to write a minimum of three days out of five.
- Children need to ‘publish’, whether by sharing, collecting, or posting their work.
- Children need to hear their teacher talk through what she is doing as she writes on the overhead or the whiteboard.
- Children need to maintain collections of their work to establish a writing history.

From: Bennet Woods Elementary School study (Pressley et al, 2007)

- Do lots of writing
- Reading and writing interlinked
- Explicit teaching of skills needed for writing
- Varied writing tasks often linked to other content areas
- Student choice of topic a feature
- Inquiry focused writing tasks a feature
- Explicit preparation for state writing tests/tasks
- Clear progression of writing demands as students went up grade levels
- Writing portfolios

Outline of Feedback Steps – from Jennifer Glenn's process

Teacher gives specific feedback linked to success criteria and goals for writing task to enable students to know what they did well and where they can improve.

Student interprets teacher feedback into own words so that they are processing teacher feedback and showing they understand it.

Student records how they feel about the feedback so that s/he and the teacher can understand how they feel about this feedback.

Student makes a small number of new goals for next attempt at (same kind of) writing to improve in some areas and develop in areas of strength

Teacher checks student interpretation of feedback, feelings and goals to make sure the intent of their feedback and feed-forward is understood

Record of the feedback is kept for later review and to document progress.

How to respond to student work

- Respond as a reader – not as a 'proof' reader
- Be specific in your feedback – clearly stating the strengths and areas to improve on next time
- Link the response back to strategy use
- Link the response back to the student's / composition's goals
- Emphasize the 'cognitive and metacognitive' aspects of writing
- Emphasize that through effort, persistence, strategy use and knowledge development that the student can improve their work